UNITED
NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/AC.241/61
16 September 1996
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH/SPANISH

INTERGOVERNMENTAL NEGOTIATING COMMITTEE
FOR THE ELABORATION OF AN INTERNATIONAL
CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION IN
THOSE COUNTRIES EXPERIENCING SERIOUS
DROUGHT AND/OR DESERTIFICATION,
PARTICULARLY IN AFRICA
Ninth session
3-13 September 1996
Agenda item 3

SPECIAL ACTION

Note verbale dated 9 September 1996 from the Permanent Mission of Mexico to the United Nations addressed to the United Nations Secretariat

The Permanent Mission of Mexico to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Secretariat of the United Nations and has the honour to refer to the Second Latin American and Caribbean Regional Conference on the Convention to Combat Desertification held in Mexico City from 17 to 19 June 1996.

Annexed hereto is a copy of the Final Act of said meeting. The Permanent Mission of Mexico to the United Nations would be grateful if this text could be circulated as part of the documentation of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the Elaboration of an International Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, at its ninth session.

The Permanent Mission of Mexico to the United Nations takes this opportunity to convey to the Secretariat of the United Nations the renewed assurances of its highest consideration.

ACT OF THE SECOND LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION

I. The Second Latin American and Caribbean Regional Conference on the Convention to Combat Desertification took place in Mexico City, from 17 to 19 June 1996.

II. Representatives of the following 20 countries from the region participated in the Conference: Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Bahamas, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia. Representatives from 5 international organizations, and 11 non-governmental organizations and scientific and academic institutions were also present. (The list of participants is attached.)

III. The officers of the Conference were as follows: President: Mexico; Vice-Presidents: Argentina and Cuba; Rapporteur: Dominican Republic.

IV. The Conference proceeded in accordance with the agenda approved by the participants (the agenda is attached). After considering the issues on the agenda in two open working groups, the participants adopted the following:

AGREEMENTS:

1. REGIONAL AND SUBREGIONAL PROGRAMMES OF ACTION

1.1 To reiterate to the countries of the region the need to determine the extent of the desertification process in each country and to develop national action programmes.

1.2 To identify subregional programmes on the basis of such studies and national action programmes.

1.3 To ask the countries of the region to undertake urgent actions for the designation of focal points, and to inform the Secretariat of the Convention accordingly.

1.4 To increase the participation of Governments and civil society, by means of concrete actions in the five subregions of the Latin American and Caribbean region, and to give preferential treatment to Haiti in horizontal cooperation projects at the subregional level, in matters relating to desertification control and drought mitigation.

2. REGIONAL COORDINATION MECHANISM

2.1 To agree on the establishment of a regional coordination mechanism for the purposes indicated in article 7, (paragraph 1, b) of the Regional Implementation Annex of the Convention, with the following objectives:

(i) Exchanges of information and experience;

(ii) Coordination of activities at the subregional and regional levels;

(iii) Promotion of scientific, technical, technological and financial cooperation;

(iv) Identification of external cooperation requirements; and

(v) Follow-up and evaluation of the implementation of action programmes.

2.2 To invite the Interim Secretariat of the Convention, bearing in mind the views of the countries in the region and in coordination with international organizations operating in the region, particularly UNEP, UNDP, ECLAC, FAO and IDB, and interested NGO networks, to prepare a proposal for terms of reference and practical modalities to operationalize this regional coordination mechanism.

2.3 To invite the Interim Secretariat of the Convention to consider, when preparing this proposal, the offer from UNEP to facilitate the establishment of the coordination mechanism within the facilities of its regional office in Mexico, as well as the offer from the Government of Mexico to financially support the operation of the mechanism.

2.4 To submit this proposal to the countries for their consideration not later than 120 days from 19 June 1996, so that it may be considered by the meeting of high-level experts which will take place in Buenos Aires, Argentina, from 31 October to 2 November, prior to the regional meeting of environment ministers.

2.5 To entrust the Government of Mexico, jointly with other interested countries, the International NGO Network on Desertification (RIOD), the network on technical cooperation in arid and semi-arid areas sponsored by FAO/UNEP and any other networks, with the task of submitting a proposal on a regional network to combat desertification at the next regional meeting, taking into account the integration of existing networks.

3. HORIZONTAL COOPERATION

3.1 To recommend the design of a standard format for information to be included in the roster of experts and national organizations working and/or doing research on topics relating to desertification control and drought mitigation and to request Mexico and Brazil to present a proposal for the said format in collaboration with UNEP and other institutions.

3.2 For Governments to draw up a list of experts from the different institutions and disciplines directly involved in activities relating to desertification control and drought mitigation, and to make an inventory of ongoing national and horizontal cooperation projects in the region with a view to identifying technical and scientific potential and proposing priority actions.

3.3 To strongly recommend that the international organizations and designated experts of Latin American and Caribbean countries should conduct a mission

to Haiti as soon as possible, to support the formulation of programmes to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought. The delegation of Haiti proposed to make the necessary arrangements so at the mission could take place with utmost urgency.

4. NATIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES

4.1 To highlight the need for all countries in the region to implement or update their national action programmes.

4.2 To coordinate actions at the regional level with a view to drawing up a subregional and regional action programme in support of the national programmes.

4.3 It has also been agreed that the national action programmes should:

Be in line with macroeconomic, social and environmental policies;

Be consistent with other existing multilateral Conventions including those on climate change and biological diversity and others relating to Agenda 21;

Integrate desertification control projects with national strategies to combat poverty;

Promote the development of proposed legislation pertaining to land and the marine coast;

Provide for necessary decentralization and active social participation within the context of the Convention;

Provide inputs to adjust the legal and institutional frameworks with a view to the national implementation of the Convention.

5. INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

5.1 At the domestic level:

To improve national coordination systems in order to optimize the resources provided from cooperation and to promote interaction between national institutions that have thematic ties with international organizations that offer assistance in combating desertification and drought mitigation.

To develop a regional and subregional position vis-à-vis international cooperation organizations operating in the region in order to strengthen the mandate and/or relevant activities of such institutions in the area of desertification.

5.2 Regarding cooperation organizations:

To acknowledge the coordination efforts made by the various cooperation agencies in recent years and to improve this interaction with a view to avoiding duplication and making optimum use of resources.

To increase the technical and financial cooperation of the various agencies on the issue of desertification.

To ask international organizations to provide Governments and focal points with more information regarding the technical and financial cooperation schemes related to desertification.

To promote specific studies to assess the costs and benefits of desertification control activities in pilot areas at the national, subregional and regional levels.

To include the issue of desertification in the cooperation programmes of the various agencies.

To underline the need for national efforts to implement the Convention to be backed by substantial financial resources, including any new and additional resources that bilateral and multilateral donors may provide in order to implement annex III, the regional implementation annex for Latin America and the Caribbean.

6. PARTICIPATION OF THE REGION IN THE NINTH SESSION OF INCD

Global mechanism

6.1 To reaffirm what was stated at the First Latin American and Caribbean Regional Conference, which was held in Buenos Aires in January 1996, and at the First Subregional Central American and Caribbean Conference, which was held in Santo Domingo in April 1996, with regard to underscoring the need for the Global Mechanism of the Convention to have its own funds in order to achieve its aims.

6.2 To define what functions the Mechanism should have before identifying the institution which is to house it.

6.3 To recommend that at the ninth session of INCD, which is to be held in September 1996 in New York, the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States (GRULAC) should refer to the document regarding this issue which was agreed at the eighth session of INCD.

6.4 To recommend that the Group of 77 and China should seek to arrive at a common position regarding the need for the global mechanism to have its own funds.

Committee on Science and Technology

6.5 After reviewing document A/AC.241/57 (annexed hereto), which was prepared on the issue by the Interim Secretariat of the Convention, the following suggestions were made:

(a) Section One:

There should be at least one representative of the Latin American and Caribbean region in the bureau of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST).

Paragraph 8 bis should be worded as follows: "The Bureau shall be responsible for follow-up of the work of the Committee between sessions and shall have the assistance of the ad hoc panels established by the Conference of the Parties."

(b) Section Two:

Paragraph 2: the words "irrespective of their nationality" should be deleted.

(c) Section Three:

Paragraph 2 should be worded as follows:

"The Conference of the Parties shall determine the number, terms of reference and modalities of work of the ad hoc panels, including its duration".

Paragraph 3, insert the following words:

"and equitable" before the words "geographical representation" in the third line.

Delete paragraph 6.

Paragraph 8, add the following: "and mechanisms for facilitating access to information will be proposed."

7. OTHER AGREEMENTS

7.1 To send a declaration to the summit meeting on sustainable development from the Second Latin American and Caribbean Regional Conference on the Convention to Combat Desertification, recommending that the summit should reaffirm that desertification and drought is a priority issue for the region, as is the effective implementation of the Convention and Annex III thereof. The text of the declaration is attached.

7.2 To endorse the Act of the First Subregional Conference for the Caribbean, Central America and Mexico, held in Santo Domingo from 18 to 20 April 1996.

7.3 To thank and congratulate the Government of Mexico for programming, organizing and implementing this Conference, as well as the Government of Spain, through the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation, UNEP, UNDP/UNSO, FAO, and the Interim Secretariat of the Convention for their contribution to the success of the Conference.

7.4 To welcome the compromise for the consolidation of the subregional programme for the sustainable development of the Gran Chaco signed by Argentina, Bolivia and Paraguay in the context of subregional programmes promoted by the Convention.

7.5 To support the organization of the Third Latin American and Caribbean Regional Conference on the Convention to Combat Desertification to be held in the Republic of Cuba during 197 prior to the first meeting of the Conference of the parties of the Convention.

7.6 To take note of the RIOD declaration, presented at the Conference by the representative of that NGO network (see annexed text).

DECLARATION OF THE SECOND LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN REGIONAL CONFERENCE HELD IN MEXICO CITY TO THE SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE AMERICAS

The summit on sustainable development in the Americas, which will be held in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia, on 7 and 8 December 1996, will provide an opportunity for Governments as well as the population in general to develop and reach sustainable development goals.

The presence of desertification and drought in our region affects the possibility of meeting such goals because of the direct links they have with important social problems, such as poverty, ill-health, food insecurity, migrations and others.

On that basis, national Governments, international organizations and NGOs participating in the "Second Latin American and Caribbean Regional Conference on the Convention to Combat Desertification", which was held from 17 to 19 June 1996 in Mexico City, urge the summit to:

- consider within the framework of its deliberations, the global implications of desertification and drought and their social, economic and environmental impact at local and regional levels;

- consider the recommendations of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, particularly Annex III thereof concerning Latin America and the Caribbean;

- promote the participation of civil society and non-governmental and international organizations in activities to combat desertification;

- promote awareness of and sensitivity to this problem at the regional and international levels.